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OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS AND CERTAIN PHASES OF EDUCA- TIONAL WORK IN GERMANY. III

GEORGE KOEPEL

Principal Twenty-first Street School, Milwaukee, Wis.

REFORM OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS

In all discussions concerning school reforms two leading ideas constantly recur and are emphasized by educators of the foremost rank.

First, the *growing necessity of raising the efficiency of the individual*, because the development of modern life, especially of the industrial conditions, makes excessive demands upon the nations who are leaders in culture and human progress, and because no people can hope to retain its place in the march of civilization or to attain supremacy in culture, unless all educational factors are so modified and intensified as to give each individual that training which will lead to the fullest development of which his innate powers are capable.

The second idea depends upon the first. If every individual is to be educated to greatest efficiency, *elementary school systems*, schools, and classes *must be organized and graded according to the mental and physical ability of pupils*. This ability varies greatly in children of the same age on account of the inherited mental and physical endowment; and these innate variations are increased, especially in large cities, by the numerous and divers economic and social conditions surrounding the children, and by the constant shifting of the population.

The failure that resulted from attempting to teach pupils of such widely different powers together in one class caused the *reconstruction of school systems on the basis of differentiation of pupils according to their ability*. These systems are so organized that they comprise: (1) schools for pupils of average ability; (2) schools for pupils who have failed to do the regular grade work; (3) schools for backward children (*Hilfsschulen*); (4) schools for pupils who

have shown unusual ability, diligence, and moral conduct; (5) a school for feeble-minded pupils.

The separation of feeble-minded children in institutions and of backward children in *Hilfsschulen* had been so long established and the resulting benefits were so apparent, that the above-mentioned further steps in the classification of the so-called normal children easily suggested themselves.

Some of the most progressive cities in Germany have succeeded in carrying this educational reform to a high degree of perfection and educators throughout Germany are discussing the system and its possible improvements and modifications most seriously. Men of the highest rank and of international reputation, as Professor Rein of Jena, regard this organization as fundamental for all future uplift of popular education.

While there are variations in details of execution in various cities, the organization of the Mannheim public schools may be considered a model of its type and will therefore be briefly discussed.

The elementary schools (*Volksschulen*) of Mannheim were attended last year by 22,677 pupils, which number does not include the pupils who attended the higher elementary schools (*Bürger-schulen*, tuition fee charged) nor the pupils of the higher types of schools.

It should be distinctly understood that the organization here to be outlined is that of the lowest class of schools, the free elementary *Volksschule*.

The city is divided into six school districts, each containing six schools. One or two of these schools in each district are central schools where all pupils of that district who are members of the special system of classes to be mentioned are brought together.

The pupils who are able to pursue the prescribed course of study with success are promoted through eight grades and form the *main system*. The membership of these classes is 45 pupils.

Those who are unusually backward are transferred to the school for the feeble-minded or to the *Hilfsschulen*, the latter being organized in some of the central district schools. These special help schools have before been described; the *membership of each class is from 14 to 18 pupils*.

The weaker pupils of the main system who have not reached the aim of the class and fail of promotion because of lack of ability, sickness, laziness, or other cause, are transferred to special classes called *Förderklassen*. These are also centralized and organized in one of the buildings of each school district. The *membership of these classes is 30 pupils*, and the system consists naturally of seven grades, the lowest containing the pupils of the first grade of the main system who could not do the grade work satisfactorily in a year.

This system of *Förderschulen* was composed last year of 93 classes with 2,764 pupils, an average of nearly 30 pupils to the class. On account of the small number of children in each class the opportunity of giving them individual attention is considerably increased, and it was originally expected by the advocates of this system that pupils could be so trained in these special classes that they might be promoted to the higher *main* class at the end of the year. The superintendent of the Mannheim schools, Dr. Sickinger, the chief promoter of this reform, was an ardent believer in the doctrine that these slower pupils could be advanced to a degree that would enable them to keep step with the pupils of the regular classes. Experience has, however, definitely demonstrated that conditions which are beyond the reach of the teachers render such success impossible. Only 131 of the 2,764 could be promoted to the higher grades of the *main* system, 125 failed completely, while the great body of about 2,500 were promoted to the next higher class within the same system. Dr. Sickinger reports in regard to this experience that—

It *again* shows that the majority of the pupils [of the *Förder* system] is merely able to progress *within this system*, and that a small number (125), in spite of the improved conditions, could not even succeed in this. Certainly it is evident that the attainment of the requirements of the regular course of study is a *matter of impossibility* for the pupils of the *Förderschulen*. As the result of this conviction, the preparation of a *special course of study* adapted to the needs of these schools has become a necessity.

The considerations that led to the establishment of a special system of *Förderklassen* parallel to the regular schools have more recently resulted in a separation of the best pupils of the four upper grades of the main system, and to the organization of these classes

of select pupils into schools. This reform logically followed from the application of the fundamental idea of the Mannheim system that "all educational agencies must be adapted to the individual capacity of the pupil." Since special schools, special courses, and special teaching had been found just and beneficial for various types of children *below* average ability, it was only fair to make special provision for the more extensive and intensive training of those children who surpass the average pupils of the regular classes in mental endowment, vigor, diligence, and moral conduct.

Those children who have given evidence of these qualifications during the first four years of their school life are admitted to these special schools and receive in the four upper grades the same instruction that is given in the higher elementary schools (the *Bürgerschulen*). It is evident that rapid progress and thoroughness of work is possible in these classes composed of the best pupils selected from a number of the surrounding district schools. The course of study for these select schools is enriched by increasing the subject-matter in arithmetic and geometry, in elementary physics, chemistry, and nature-study, and by the addition of four hours of French each week.

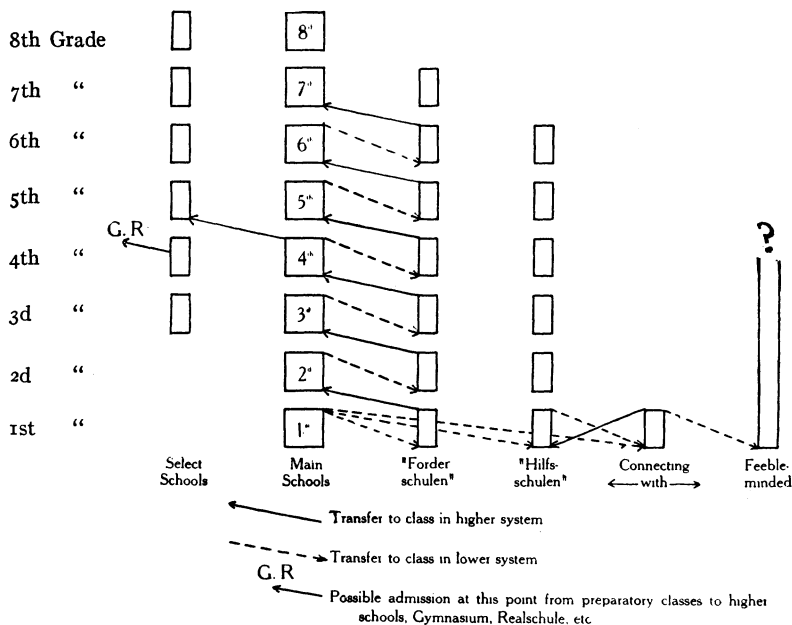
The *select pupils* of the fifth grades are taught in their respective schools, but those of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are brought together from a larger territory and are formed into classes that are *organized into schools in centrally located buildings*.

It is only fair to mention here that while the other features of the Mannheim system have found general recognition, the practice of removing the best from the less gifted pupils of a class is a matter of question much debated in educational circles of Germany.

The horizontal differentiation of pupils of the same grade in the Mannheim elementary schools and the resulting interrelations of the four parallel systems described above are synoptically expressed in the scheme shown on p. 291. This system can easily be varied to suit local conditions, and other cities have introduced it with such modifications. The results obtained have been declared very satisfactory by government inspectors and educators of rank.

Wonders cannot be worked by any system, but proper organization can supply such conditions that permit placing children

where the instruction, the subject-matter, and all other educational factors are adapted to their ability. While these arrangements are in themselves of great benefit to the pupils, they prepare the way for another great advantage that cannot be overrated. The teacher is relieved of much strain and anxiety and saves much



nervous energy by the exclusion of those pupils who are not properly members of his group and who are a burden to him and to his class. The improved conditions reduce the chances of irritation and consequently conserve the energy and enhance the cheerfulness of the teacher; and cheerfulness is fundamental to an educator's success.

Differentiation of pupils according to ability and centralization of differentiated classes to form schools of their kind are the key-notes of the success of this system.

CONTINUATION SCHOOLS

One of the greatest achievements in popular education in Germany is the extensive, systematic, and thorough provision for

the continued training of boys and young men while they are employed in various trades and occupations. This training tends to raise the general efficiency of the young generation and is one of the factors of the surprising cultural and industrial progress of Germany. These schools are of various types and cover the whole field of industrial activity; they are in operation from early morning till night and even on Sunday. The simplest type is the obligatory continuation school that must be attended by all boys till they are at least seventeen years of age. From a somewhat extended district the boys are gathered and formed into classes according to their trade and at the same time according to their previous preparation. In the Berlin schools about one thousand classes with thirty thousand students were in operation last year in this type of school alone. Each class contains members of a certain trade only and the variety of occupations represented is very great. There are classes for bricklayers, masons, painters, carpenters, machinists, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, precision mechanics, electro-mechanics, goldsmiths, tailors, bakers, confectioners, cooks, waiters, chimney-sweepers, and others. Among them were 149 classes of commercial apprentices with an attendance of 4,416.

The particular trade of the members of the class forms the basis and center of all instruction. While the work must of necessity have a cultural effect, it is planned to be of practical utility. All classes are taught the rights and duties of citizenship. The course comprises three years, in some places even four years. Each class attends school from six to nine hours a week, *not* in the evening but *during regular business hours*. At the beginning of a semester, the time for each class is fixed and the employers are notified. The apprentices are excused by their employers regularly and without fail. Sufficient time must be allowed them to go home and get ready for school, as they are expected to appear in class clean in person and dress. Attendance and deportment at these schools are very satisfactory. The discipline presents little difficulty as the teachers are efficient disciplinarians and are effectively supported and protected by law.

There was at first opposition to these *day* continuation schools

on the part of employers, as these were unwilling to lose the services of their apprentices so many hours a week, but the increased efficiency and skill of the boys resulting from the training received at school gradually silenced the opposition, and now the great value of these schools is so generally recognized that the combined efforts of the government, the employers, and the educators are turned to the problems of highest practical efficiency.

The continuation schools for girls reinforce and broaden the training which the girls have received in the elementary schools, and are intended specially "to give intellectual stimulation toward gaining a serious view of life and to foster the desire and skill for woman's work." Besides the fundamental branches, the following subjects are taught: bookkeeping, commercial correspondence, commercial geography, typewriting, shorthand, drawing, designing, French, English; ironing, repairing of clothing, sewing, machine sewing, machine embroidering, cutting of undergarments, dressmaking, artistic fancy work, cooking, hygiene, dietetics, gymnastics, and singing. Special continuation schools are established for mentally backward youths and girls, for the deaf, and for the blind.

For ambitious young people schools of a higher type are in operation. In these the students may elect to study branches, or do practical work, not taught at the obligatory schools. Most of these secondary schools are evening and Sunday schools, and *all are crowded with students, although attendance at these schools does not exempt the student from the regular work in the obligatory schools.* The commercial schools of this type teach all the advanced commercial branches including commercial law, political economy, English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian.

[To be continued]